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ABSTRACT

This paper is supportive to the anthropological principle of biculturation as a pragmatic principle of education of America's contemporary ethnically-different people. The acquisition of bilingualism and a bicultural ethos are objective evidences of this process in action. Personal experiences of the author's childhood education in a Greek and American culture are detailed as a basis for development of the author's theory that educational opportunity is found in the nature of biculturation. Problems of the Science related to the basic category of ethnicity--the acquisition of speech and language--are discussed. (SHM)

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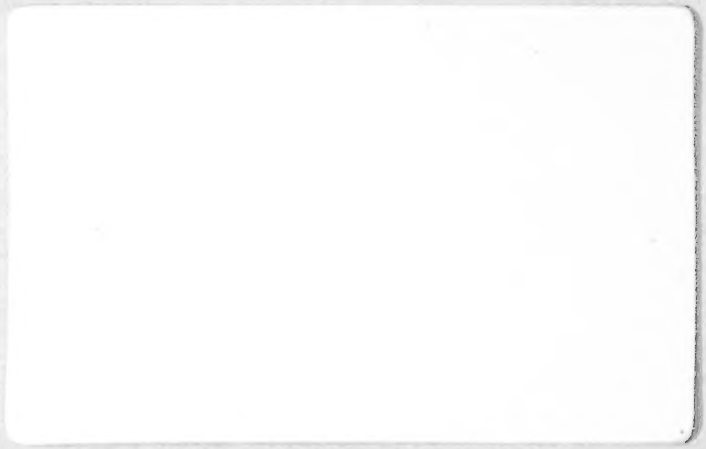

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ETHNICITY: SCIENCE, BEING, AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

by

James Steve Counelis

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Office of Institutional Studies

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Equality of Educational Opportunity--
Ethnic Perspectives: A Symposium

American Educational Research Association
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ETHNICITY: SCIENCE, BEING, AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

by

James Steve Counelis[+]

Ethnicity: Science

Ethnicity is a noun not universally found in dictionaries. Nor is it found in glossaries nor indices of anthropological, sociological, or political science literature. Gould and Kolb's 1964 UNESCO volume, A Dictionary of the Social Sciences[1] has no such entry. Nor does the 1968 International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.[2] Rather the adjectival form "ethnic" and words prefixed with "ethno-" are found.

There is an immense descriptive literature on ethnic groups. But "ethnicity" is treated as some relatively undefinable and more often ambiguous category or variable that is encapsulated in time-related socially relevant topics like prejudice, religiosity, social stratification, psychological processes like identification or "closed minds." The Adorno,

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et al., The Authoritarian Personality (1950) study,[3] Rokeach's The Open and Closed Mind (1960),[4] Coleman's Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966),[5] and Schermerhorn's Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research (1970)[6] all illustrate the ancillarity of "ethnicity" as an object of systematic inquiry. Though the following hypothesis cannot be tested, empirically, this writer suspects that the underlying epistemology of the voyeuristic "objectifying" scholarship style in American anthropology and sociology in the last two generations precluded the denotative delineation of ethnicity. To find the most spare definition for ethnicity would have required intersubjective and intra-psychosocial data, such as was suggested by Alfred Schutz.[7] By their own testimony, American anthropologists and sociologists studied foreign culture and society in order to obtain objective substantive and structural insights into their own world. It became scientific to describe "ethnic communities," "ethnic groups and social stratification," "ethnic prejudice and stereotypes," "ethnic politics," and "ethnocentrism." Certainly "assimilation," "accommodation rates" and "the marginal man" were studies within the comfort of one's own ego-involved ethnocentricity. Sympathy rather than "risk-taking" and "risk-bearing" empathy was the stereotypical approach. Though men were made in the image and like of God, to turn a biblical phrase, scientific men must learn, if they haven't already done so, that each person must live within his own mortal nature and

learn through that nature as it is individually construed. And this fact is to the contrary of Weber's admonition toward ethical neutrality.[8] What is hoped for is a wider epistemology in the social and behavioral sciences that would admit intersubjective and intro-psychosocial data. I am delighted to see a current trend in that direction.[9]

There are several connotations to the classical Greek noun, ἔθνος. These are: (1) a company or a body of men; (2) a race or tribe, genetically construed; (3) a nation, a people; (4) a particular class of men, a caste. As such ethnicity can be understood as a social concept that differentiate men into groups. But the differentiae require delineation, for those familiar with the literature on ethnic society and behavior recognize the core ideas found in the classical Greek noun ἔθνος.

In a classic essay,"Ethnic Communities," that should be noted for its clarity, insight, and brevity, Caroline F. Ware defined ethnic communities through their characteristics as "groups bound together by common ties of race, nationality, or culture, living together within an alien civilization by remaining culturally distinct."[10] The classical Greek notions of ἔθνος are found within this description-type definition of ethnic communities. To extrapolate a spare definition for ethnicity therefrom, ethnicity appears to be a category using the differentiae of race and language in the same way that the common man differentiates himself from others, regardless

of the geographical juxtaposition of groups at a given historical time and place. Empirical experiences of men suggest that in the practical order of affairs race per se is not a barrier to communication. But language is such a barrier regardless of race. Sans the matériel of culture, language is the primary phenomenon which separates men into describable cultures. And it is of empirical significance to add that given a common language, human preferences are made upon the basis of belief congruence rather than upon ethnic or racial congruence.[11]

From the first federal census in 1790 to the present, the demographic/geographical survey has been the one social science research method that has been linked consistently to public policy in the United States. The extensive census studies on immigration and immigrants in 1911,[12] the school survey movement most recently typified by excellence in Havighurst's The Public Schools of Chicago (1964),[13] the Chicago school of urban sociology,[14] the Coleman report,[15] and national educational assessment[16] are all in this tradition. Currently done by a variety of social and behavioral scientists,studies on poverty, the culturally different, and urban life impact upon education have been informing in a descriptive sense. But how are such studies useful to educators in their professional roles as teachers of students before them, regardless of socio-economic background, race, and or ethnic character? Beyond some appreciation, such information is not

in itself applicable to teaching. No scientific principle is found in discrete descriptions of people and cultures because by its nature "description" is not actionable for instructional purposes.[17]

This is not an indictment of the literature on ethnic groups and behavior. It is an indictment against the professional expectation that anthropological and sociological descriptions of ethnic groups contain pedagogical principle. Such a recently published anthology on ethnic groups as Webster's Knowing and Understanding the Socially Disadvantaged Ethnic Minority Groups (1972)[18] merely is informational.

Now, where does this leave us? Is there any science about ethnicity at all, except as some undefined or ambiguous factor that exists in linguistically different groups? I believe there is one piece of anthropological science that can be used in the education of culturally-different children and adults in our plurally-ethnic society. That anthropological principle is biculturation.

Biculturation is known to be operative when persons are encluturated and socialized in two different ways of living at the same time. The acquisition of bilingualism and a bicultural ethos are objective evidences of this process in action. Polger documents biculturation for Mesquakie Indian boys on the reservation.[19] But what is the phenomenology of this biculturation process?

Ethnicity: Being

To be reared in Chicago as I had is to be reared ethnically. The polyglot neighborhood structure was my environment. It was to live in racial diversity and linguistic heterogeneity, albeit in quasi-contained areas. The loci of my ethnic life were the family, the "American" school, the Greek Orthodox parish church, its language school and community, and an ancillary network of Greek-speaking institutions, including a viable press and radio programming.

My father was a hardworking restaurant man all of his life. He both owned and managed eateries of all sizes and shapes. He came to the United States at 14 years of age in 1904. He was a warm and generous man whose English was better than his Greek even though he had had a first year gymnasium education in Greece.

My mother, a very nurturant woman, came to the United States at the age of 10. My maternal grandparent's home was a very Greek home with the wholesome peasant ethos of hard work, the merit of the extended family, and a folk piety and belief in Orthodox Christianity that fitted them well for their long lives in this country. My mother recalls the linguistic difficulty she had in the local public school from which she soon dropped out. She also recalled no difficulty in doing the arithematic for that class, a common language of western schools.

But her English today is much better than her Greek.

In retrospect, my sister and I were reared in a loving home, one that is aptly described to be a "hothouse." Our home was also a bilingual home; though as we grew up, it became more monolingual, that is, more English-speaking. It was not uncommon for my parents, or grandparents, or some aunt or uncle to speak to me in Greek and I to respond in English. You can certainly imagine the oddity of that behavior in the 1930's when going shopping in Chicago Loop department stores. My homespun kitchen Greek was quite enriched by the humor, old wive's tales, the quick repartee and sayings and proverbs that make language a cultural experience with empathic dimensions.

I attended the local public schools, generically called "the American school." My elementary school experience was in one school that originally was dominated by Jewish children; and that by graduation time eight years later had changed to an all-black school. While in the elementary school, I was invited to join a local boys' scout troop in the Jewish synagogue across from the school. I enjoyed that a lot, even though I did not understand the private and religious environment of Jewish children and their temple of worship.

My high school had a small Italian and Greek group

of students; but for the most part, it was dominated by Swedes and old stock-Americans of the upper middle class. Ethnic divisions were natural in both of these schools. Ethnic and religious holidays were observed through student absences. Ethnic and religious holidays were in-group experiences too private to share but open to anyone who wished to venture in to see.

The Greek Orthodox parish in which I was reared had, since 1910, operated a bilingual day elementary school, whose graduates went straight into the Chicago public high schools. For those parents whose children attended the "American" school, an afternoon Greek language school was available. I attended this school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 Pm.m for six years. I graduated from this school. From native Greek-trained teachers, I learned both katharevousa and demotiki types of Greek. The textbooks were imported school books from Greece. The curricular content was literary, historical, religious, and grammatical in character. From that experience in Greek language study and with a couple of courses in classical Greek at the University of Chicago, I am now able to converse in modern demotic Greek, read a newspaper, write a letter with the aid of a grammar and dictionary, and read technical materials and Koine Greek with a dictionary. At the doctoral level, I passed a reading/translation test in modern Greek at the University of Chicago.

I grew up in the shadow of the Greek Orthodox Church

and its schools: the Greek language school, the Sunday school, the several youth groups of the church and several public service Greek-speaking national groups. It is in this church environment that I still live, albeit in another city and state today.

Historically, Greek society has always merited most highly the educated man. Indeed, the thirtieth of January is a Greek Orthodox feastday that honors the patron saints of scholars and students, these saints being St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory Nanzianzen and St. Basil the Great. Most certainly in my home, education was highly prized.

My education was always advantaged by my knowledge of Greek, be it in the sciences, mathematics, the humanities or the social sciences. Conceptual elaboration was possible through such linguistic capacity, for the higher the education, the more abstract and sophisticated the conceptual elaboration in the disciplines. But my linguistic knowledge of English was enhanced also through my high school study of Spanish for three years and my university study of French and German for reading competence.

Living in two worlds, the one American the other that of the immigrant Greek, was not an emotional strain. It was a natural thing to do. Everyone else I knew was doing the same. However, I did want to know, culturally, who I was when I became college age. I eventually earned a master's degree

in American history and philosophy. I spent a good amount of time in church history and in the history of the new immigration. A culminating type of experience in this area was a detailed local parish history, from its founding to 1927. Through that bit of research, I came to understand in a more personal and empathic way the Odyssean theme in Greek history through the lives of my own family and those of the community in which I lived. Equally, I came to understand the quality of the early life of my parish as "a Greek polis in exile," self-contained by American corporate law in the congregational government of the community church, a Greek language school, and a Greek-speaking praying community with satellite social groups.[20]

In 1957, I traveled to France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. I found American travelers everywhere; and I found Greek colonies everywhere, usually located around the church or some commercial enterprise. My experience in Greece demonstrated to me how culturally American I was in relation to the native Greek. And I am sure that recent post-World War II immigrants from Greece find a peculiar Greek community in the United States. The peasant traditions in piety, foods, dancing, and linguistic habits are the American remnants of the original immigrant Greek culture, established between 1890 and 1930 in the United States. Greco-English barbarisms are rampant in the patois speech of American Greeks. In fact these barbarisms very often become objects of puns and "high humor"

where English homophones have humorous Greek peasant meanings. These become a source of much in-group humor.

Phenomenologically, my work world and my social world are a seamless fabric of continuing experience. This bicultural experience provides to me an active comparative and contrastive set of insights into American and immigrant Greek culture as a continuing lived experience. Though I have not experienced monolinguisity, I feel that the opportunity to experience cultural conflict and the cultural integrity earned through the resolution of that conflict are vital affective education. American values interpenetrate Greek values in my psyche and nous. I know not where one begins and the other ends. Commitment to God, country, family, and profession is biculturally biased as is my scholarship. And though my wife and I are both biculturally advantaged, our children through our family life-style will probably be American with a Greek spirit, but with less linguistic facility than I was privileged to possess. For me, the "Greek polis in exile" is gone. It is my view that an American Orthodox Church is in the making, wherein the old world linguistic basis of the Orthodox Church in America is evolving toward English monolinguisity and an American ecclesial morphology. Indeed I am a published advocate to that movement.[21]

Taking Schutz's phenomenology to heart, I believe that the biculturative process through which I evolved provides

valuable educational insight. I believe that insight is the following. When both American and Greek culture were taught honestly and persuasively by their advocates (accompanied by the reinforcements of home and society), the early acquisition of languages and values was positive and stable in result. The personal experience was not without its trials and frustrations; but so is all rearing experience. I am persuaded that biculturation is a viable policy and practice for the education of our contemporary ethnically-different people. Indeed America's value to respect the dignity and integrity of its people is manifested through this policy and practice. Educational opportunity is found in the nature of biculturation.

Ethnicity: Educational Opportunity

A review of the science related to the acquisition of speech and language--the basic category of ethnicity--reveals that there is little in scientific principle for teachers to use beyond the effect of *praxis*. Osser's evaluation of the several positions on language development does not indicate the flux of uncertainty but the fog of ignorance.[22] Osser enumerates four problem areas for which scientific explanations beyond speculation have yet to be developed. And from my vantage point, language acquisition appears to be a mystery that science has yet to solve. The problem areas out-

lined by Osser were: (1) the development of prelinguistic vocalization; (2) the acquisition of basic language structures; (3) the acquisition of elaborated language sequences; (4) the acquisition of the appropriate modes of communication, viz., the ability to use different styles of speech such as narrative or explanatory styles when appropriate to the social situation.[23] A systems analysis of these language research questions suggests that current research on language acquisition is stymied because language and speech data are empirical "traces" of the language acquisition process but not the process itself. Chart No. 1 presents Osser's four problems in language acquisition research in a two dimensional typology. The one dimension is based upon Laszlo's systems theory of mind.[24] The second dimension is based upon Parsons et al. classification of action systems.[25] Perhaps this comprehensive hierarchical understanding of these problems in language acquisition research might suggest a scientific thrust or orientation to the solution of these problems across the hierarchical boundaries delineated by the Laszlo and Parsons categories. It appears that an interdisciplinary approach is required that is beyond the psycholinguist, the learning theorist, the anatomist, and other social scientists, individually. In the absence of scientific principles, certain pragmatic ways need to be adopted, these arising from experience.

Formal and informal education occur through language. For the education of the culturally-different person

to succeed in the United States, a commitment in principle and resources is necessary. The 1972 AACTE statement of multicultural education explicates my position excellently.[26] Under that statement, biculturation as an educating principle in American public schools is possible. Pragmatically, biculturation can occur through the application of the following principles:[27]

> (1) teach in two languages, beginning with the mother tongue of the student;
>
> (2) teach the second language in the "natural" sequence of human language acquisition, viz., hearing, understanding and speaking and then proceeding to reading and writing;
>
> (3) teach all school subjects in either language by the end of the eighth grade.

Not to use the mother tongue of the student for instructional purposes is a lost educational opportunity for both the student and the school. What a waste of linguistic skills which the child has amassed during his first 5 or 6 years of living![28] Leaverton's dialectic readers and his work in helping black children to distinguish between "school talk" and "everyday talk" is certainly along the lines suggested here.[29]

My hope is for American education to take seriously biculturation as a pragmatic principle of education. Certainly, the bankruptcy of traditional approaches called bilingual teaching[30] and the deficit/difference models for educating the so-called socially or culturally disadvantaged children is quite evident everywhere.[31] A return to Comenius' work, The

Great Didactic (1638) is instructive, for he writes pointedly to us by saying:

> Base all teaching on the pupils capacities as they are developed in the course of time and progress in school.[32]

In the absence of scientific principles on language acquisition, the pragmatics of biculturation can become operative if one begins with the ethnicity of the student through the language he uses everyday. Ethnicity is the portal to educational opportunity for all, educational opportunity for both the culturally different American and his monolingual English-speaking American cousin. Ethnicity as an educational opportunity affirms America's democratic commitment to the dignit- and integrity of the individual, an American value worthily to be taught by the example of the school's curriculum.

> When the Most High came down and confused the tongues in Babel, He divided the nations; but when the Holy Spirit distributed the tongues of fire, He called all men to unity. Therefore with one accord, we glorify Thee.
>
> ---Kontakion of the Sunday of Pentecost
> The Pentecostarion

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CHART NO. 1: SYSTEMS TYPOLOGY OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO OSSER

LASZLO'S SYSTEMS THEORY OF MIND Information-Flows Levels	PARSONS' CLASSIFICATION OF ACTION SYSTEMS		
	PERSONALITY	SOCIAL SYSTEM	CULTURE
L_2 : Metasensory Feedback Cultural/Social Level		PROBLEM NO. 4 PROBLEM NO. 3	
L_1 : Sensory Feedback Perceptual/Cognitive Level	PROBLEM NO. 1 PROBLEM NO. 2		
L_0 : Homeostatic Feedback Physiological Level			Note: No meaning attached to scale or shape; only area overlap intended.